



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ready for School. Set for Life.

Standards of Practice Family, Friend and Neighbor Care

I. Strategy Description

First Things First defines Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) care as: a broad range of child care arrangements provided in the home of the child or caregiver, by extended family members, friends, neighbors and other unrelated adults for a fee, or free, while parents need to be away, go to work or go to school. Family, friend and neighbor care is also often referred to as *kith and kin, informal care, unregulated and license exempt child care, or relative care*. (BUILD Initiative, Families and Work Institute, CLASP)

National estimates suggest that as many as 60 percent of all children need child care due to parent's employment and, of these, as many as 50 percent of children ages 5 and under are cared for in FFN settings. Family, friend and neighbor care providers typically do not receive regular access to information, education, or training on children's health, safety and child development. In Arizona, FFN care providers can legally care for 4 children for pay, with a maximum limit of 6 children under the age of 12, including their own. For these homes, there is no licensing or regulatory requirement; therefore, there is no mechanism or support system in place to assist these providers in creating high-quality environments for the children for whom they provide care. Child care provided by FFN caregivers, for the most part, is legally exempt from regulation and is therefore of growing interest to families and policymakers.

Nationally, in-home care is the most common type of child care for children under the age of 5 whose parents work (Maher & Joesch, 2005; Snyder, Dore, & Adelman, 2005). Nearly half of all children spend their days – and sometimes their nights – in these types of settings (Boushey & Wright, 2004). Increased availability of information, relevant trainings, and supports for providers who care for children in their homes has been identified by several Regional Councils as a strategy to both improve the quality of care being provided, and increase the over-all professional development of these care providers. Additionally, the strategies include expanding existing services of federal, state, tribal, and community agencies to provide research-based resources, seminars and hands-on training to improve basic parenting/care giving skills, knowledge and understanding.

Evidence suggests that training provided to FFN caregivers can result in positive outcomes for children. For example, report findings from a national study involving Arizona community partners who provided training and support to FFN caregivers, showed that 81 percent of providers indicated making specific changes in the care provided to the children as a result of their involvement in the program. The impact was noted in the following areas: 1) safety in the

home environment, particularly fire safety; 2) establishing and maintaining a daily schedule for the children; 3) encouraging providers to utilize the resources of their local library; 4) developing a written formalized child care services agreement with parents, and 5) increased knowledge regarding the Child and Adult Food Program. Participants in this program indicated interest in becoming better providers by providing a higher level of care to the children and families they serve. (*ERIC Education Resource Information Center, ED496388, Strategies for Supporting Quality in Kith and Kin Child Care: Findings from the Early Head Start Enhanced Home Visiting Pilot Evaluation. Final Report, <http://eric.ed.gov>*)

In 2010, a local study of over 800 participants in the Arizona Kith and Kin Project, conducted by the Indigo Cultural Center, found significant increases in quality indicators in the areas of: health and safety; materials in the physical environment; provider-child communication patterns; provider engagement; learning activities; and providers' basic knowledge about child development.

Research has also been conducted relative to promoting the health and safety of children by increasing the knowledge base of families. In several studies regarding toddler obesity, motor vehicle restraint usage, and increasing father participation in the child-raising process, group sessions, seminars and trainings have been shown to be effective service delivery methods.

In recent years, the question of what types of child care programs best prepare children for kindergarten has emerged as a dominant issue in the early care and education public policy agenda. This has been propelled to the forefront due to the national focus on children's school achievement and the widespread creation of state-funded pre-kindergarten programs for three and four year old children. Growing awareness of the large number of children in unregulated FFN care settings and emphasis on school readiness has generated increasing interest in efforts to support these caregivers and their need for professional development. (Research to Policy Connections No. 5, Assessing Initiatives for Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care, March 2007).

II. Standards of Practice

While each First Things First funded community-based professional development program may be uniquely designed, they all have a valuable role to play in meeting the complex needs of early care and home based care providers, families, and communities across Arizona. First Things First focuses on programs and services that provide children with the best opportunities for school and life success. Promising models in working with FFN providers are those that include some variation of the following components:

- In-home support for FFN caregivers: with some variations of duration and intensity, professional development and coaching is provided to caregivers in their home to achieve individualized goals (quality safety, nutrition, etc.)
- Community-based training and professional development: Professional development through group meetings and trainings are delivered in a series of ongoing sessions that bring home-based providers together with qualified and experienced staff in a community setting to learn elements of quality care and safety and that are responsive to the needs and diversity among FFN care providers. Child care should be provided and the sessions should take place at a time convenient for the FFN providers.

- Playgroup opportunities: In socialization or “Play and Learn” models, caregivers and children participate together in activities in a center-like setting offered in different sites in the community with the spaces ideally equipped with a variety of activities that are intended to promote cognitive, language, and physical development. Staff facilitators, whose backgrounds include early childhood and parent education, model interactions with children for the caregivers.
- A pathway to regulation: Information, support, additional resources and financial supports are provided for FFN providers who wish to become certified or licensed.

Within all models and approaches there needs to be consideration of, and opportunities for, the following:

- Distribution of financial incentives to help purchase safety and quality improvement equipment/materials
- Resource and referral information on health and development of young children as well as information on resources available in the community
- Information and support on being a regulated provider
- Information and referral information on obtaining certification related to early childhood education

First Things First funded programs may supplement but not supplant other state expenditures for, or federal monies received for early childhood development and health programs. Funding decisions are based upon a robust process of review to ensure funded programs are supported by research, are respectful of families, and use approaches considered to be best practice.

Those who propose to serve the FFN population must meet the following requirements:

- Focus on building collaborative partnerships with existing programs and agencies in order to build upon current revenue and funding sources.
- Enhance and expand current training opportunities to include FFN providers.
- Develop evaluative and monitoring processes that are collaborative, ongoing and that include input from providers, program administrators and staff, families, and community members.
- Include pre and post evaluative activities that involve self-assessment by FFN providers, and provide opportunities for feedback conversations with their trainer/instructor.
- Identify outreach, engagement and retention practices for home-based care providers.
- Demonstrate program effectiveness by meeting and addressing First Things First performance measures, outcomes and key measures.
- Demonstrate evidence that the Grantee can retain high quality staff whose tenure ensures program integrity and consistency in home-based care provider relationships.

III. Qualifications for Trainers/Instructors:

- Instructors should be knowledgeable about and possess experience in working with home care providers, adult learners and young children birth to age five.
- Instructors must have experience in early childhood education or elementary education with a concentration in early childhood, child and family studies, or a closely related field. Supervisors must meet or exceed these requirements with at least two years of

program management experience. If programs experience hardship in recruitment efforts, they must notify and consult with First Things First.

- Instructors should possess appropriate credentials and experience in conducting professional development activities.
- Instructors should demonstrate knowledge and skills that reflect current best practices and research and that are aligned with the Arizona Infant Toddler Developmental Guidelines and Arizona Early Learning Standards.
- Instructors should have a minimum five years experience working with young children (combination of classroom and supervisory experience). If programs experience hardship in recruitment of qualified trainers/instructors, they must notify and consult with First Things First.
- Instructors should have experience working with adult learners and diverse cultures.
- Instructors with knowledge of diverse populations and languages preferred.

Applicants delivering professional development opportunities to FFN providers will be required to ensure that opportunities are designed and implemented according to the following principles:

- Professional development opportunities to FFN care providers are based upon a culture of trust and respect.
 - Clearly define program objectives to ensure comprehension, engagement, and retention.
 - Create opportunities for and act upon formal and informal feedback ensuring that input shapes on-going decision-making.
 - Encourage honest, open communication between participants and instructors.
 - Maintain confidentiality, being respectful of program participants.
 - Are culturally responsive
- Sessions should be based on current research, core areas of competency, and early learning standards.
 - Curriculum should incorporate and reflect the theoretical framework that informs practice in the classroom/home.
- Sessions should be responsive to the needs of the region's FFN care providers.
- Experiences should be relevant to the participant's background and role as an FFN care provider.
- Sessions should involve adult active learning techniques for participants.

Providers of community-based professional development opportunities for early care and home based care providers will:

- Increase the availability of and participation in high quality professional development opportunities for those working with or preparing to work with children birth through age five.
- Provide high quality professional development opportunities through innovative and creative approaches.
- Develop outreach and recruitment practices that engage and retain participants.
- Provide resource and referral information to participants on the healthy development of young children; and resources available in the community such as early literacy programs, family support agencies, and physical and oral health resources.
- Provide resource and referral information to participants who indicate an interest in being a regulated provider or obtaining certification or degree related to early childhood education and related fields.

- Identify and coordinate with existing training opportunities within the region.
- Conduct trainings based on best practices and research giving consideration to:
 - Utilizing subject matter experts (Child Care Health Consultants, local physicians, published authors, researchers, etc.) to enhance training content and delivery
 - The frequency and sequence of training sessions
- Provide professional development sessions that are interactive, model desired behaviors, and address the multiple learning styles of adult learners.
 - At a minimum, topics must include:
 - Understanding the five domains of early childhood development (physical well being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and cognition and general knowledge) for typically developing children and children with special needs
 - Observing and understanding children's behaviors
 - Ensuring safe and healthy learning environments
 - Understanding ethical and professional issues when working with young children
 - Utilizing developmentally appropriate practices
 - Advancing physical and intellectual competence
 - Supporting social/emotional development and using positive guidance techniques
 - Establishing respectful, positive, and productive relationships with families
 - Ensuring a well-run purposeful program responsive to child and family needs
 - Understanding the need to limit screen time for young children
 - Understanding the health, nutrition and physical activity needs of young children
 - Additional training topics may include, but are not limited to:
 - Sensory integration, behavioral health, and special needs
 - Role of creativity in learning
 - Role of materials in the learning environment
 - Role of the arts in cognitive and social emotional growth and development
 - Role of the environment and environmental design in children's learning
 - Role of the teacher/educator as researcher
 - Significance of play
 - Written and oral communication skills of providers
- Maintain flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues in the community and the early childhood field.
 - Recruit staff from the community who has extensive knowledge of community resources
 - Recruit staff that reflect the cultural and ethnic experiences and language of the participants, and integrate their expertise into the program
 - Develop a collaborative, coordinated response to community needs
 - Be accessible for program participants
- Ensure the provision of high-quality professional development opportunities through experienced and responsive staff.

Programs delivering professional development opportunities to support Family Friends and Neighbor Care will be required to ensure that these opportunities are designed and implemented according to the following principles:

- Create collaborations with and among agencies and other early care and education stakeholders such as Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), Arizona Kith & Kin Project, Child Care Resource and Referral, regional libraries, Head Start programs, school districts, Child Care Health Consultants, professional development training and scholarship systems, and other programs working with child-care homes.
- Respond to the diversity among FFN care providers by addressing the individual needs of home-based care providers.
- Address transportation issues or assist with access to transportation to and from professional development sessions.
- Provide materials to FFN care providers, including safety equipment and/or safety kits, books, or educational materials that are developmentally appropriate for the children being served.
- Ensure community-based professional development seminars and hands-on training are evidence-based and relevant to the communities in which providers are working and include seminars, small group sessions or other methods of gathering FFN providers together so that information and materials can be delivered, peer connections can be made, and opportunities for discussion and group learning are accessible.
- Ensure CPR/First Aid certification, and/or safety training for FFN care providers is part of overall training.
- Ensure a system of support for FFN care providers that incorporates a mentoring or coaching component, is research-based and proven to improve the quality outcomes for home-based child care, and can be provided via a variety of service delivery methods.

FFN services will include:

- Identification and recruitment of FFN providers caring for children birth through age five.
- Fostering professional, supportive relationships between FFN care givers and community-based coaches or mentors.
- Providing assistance, coaching, mentoring and support, by community-based coaches or mentors, to FFN care providers, as needed and appropriate, to increase the quality of child care that is provided and to help move in-home care providers toward appropriate licensure.
- Creating a program improvement plan with the provider, specific to each provider and the children they care for, that will serve as a roadmap for the provider to move towards higher quality of care and potentially towards licensure.
- Implementing a strength-based curriculum that focuses on safety, brain development, social-emotional developmental needs, positive guidance and discipline, nutrition, parent/caregiver relationships, language and literacy, appropriate learning activities, culture, and health and sanitary practices.
- Developing training materials for providers that identify and utilize available resources.
- Fostering partnerships between existing community agencies and entities so that training, information, services and other supports for FFN care providers can be provided at non-traditional settings and locations, such as public schools, and other “education” settings.

- Coordinating with other First Things First statewide and regionally funded programs

IV. Programs will also implement the following best practices and standards related to Cultural Competencies:

- To address cultural competency objectives, early childhood practitioners /early childhood service providers shall ensure that children and families receive from all staff members and program participants’ effective, understandable, and respectful care that is provided in a culturally competent manner. Early childhood practitioners /early childhood service providers should ensure that staff and participants at all levels and across all disciplines receive ongoing education and training in culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery. Early childhood practitioners/early childhood service providers should develop participatory, collaborative partnerships with communities and utilize a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate community and family-centered involvement to ensure that services are delivered in a manner that is consistent with the National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services and/or the National Recommendations on Cultural and Linguistic Competence for the National Association for the Education of Young Children.”
<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15>
<http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/linguistic>
- Service providers should understand individual Tribes/Nations are distinct and separate communities from other Tribes/Nations and their governmental systems and structures are not reflective of each other. Services to Tribal communities and on reservations must be provided in a manner compatible with the Tribe’s/Nation’s cultural beliefs and practices, to include the preferred language of the community. Services must also be provided in accordance with the Tribe’s/Nation’s laws, policies and procedures. The effectiveness of services is directly related to the provider’s consideration of the beliefs, customs and laws of the Tribe/Nation.
- Service providers can obtain information about providing services on tribal lands from a variety of sources. These include the FTF Regional Director, Regional Council members, tribal websites and publications, as well as official representatives of the Tribe/Nation such as the governing body, standing committees and authorized departments.
- It is highly recommended that service providers seek guidance from one or more of these sources before initiating services on reservations. Failure to do so could result in contraventions of cultural beliefs, Tribal laws or sovereignty.
- The ideal applicant will demonstrate their ability to operate within these parameters through prior experience working with Tribes/Nations, demonstrating that staff is culturally competent, partnerships with agencies serving Native American families, knowledge of cultural beliefs, customs and laws of the Tribe/Nation or a combination of these elements.
- Related to data collection, evaluation or research activities:
 - In the United States, Native American Tribes are considered autonomous nations with all of the rights and responsibilities of a nation. Understanding this, Native American Tribes are charged with protecting the health and safety of their people. To this end, Tribes have full ownership over any data collected within their reservation boundaries. This means that Tribes can allow or not allow any program to collect data from or related to any early childhood development and health program or activities on the reservation.

- Any grantee implementing programs in tribal communities must have official tribal permission to collect and utilize sensitive data from or related to any early childhood development and health program or activities.

ⁱ National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services and/or the National Recommendations on Cultural and Linguistic Competence for the National Association for the Education of Young Children.”
<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15> <http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/linguistic>